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**Ehrlich Administration Adopts Initiatives
to Strengthen Poultry Industry**

ANNAPOLIS -- Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., has directed his administration to implement a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at strengthening Maryland's poultry industry. The recommendations, which were submitted to the Governor by his Poultry Issues Action Team, include maintaining a strong local base of productive farmland, developing alternative uses for poultry litter, and attracting investment from a new generation of farmers.

"Poultry is Maryland's top agricultural industry, providing a half billion dollars in Maryland farm income last year and employing 15,000 people in the Delmarva region. I want to make sure it remains an economic force well into Maryland's future," said Governor Ehrlich. "I look forward to implementing many of the action team's recommendations through multiple agencies, and I sincerely thank the nine members for their hard work in finding solutions to difficult challenges."

Additional recommendations the Ehrlich-Steele Administration will implement include:

- Targeting conservation of land for agricultural purposes;
- Exploring alternative uses for poultry manure, including the potential for using litter to generate electricity;
- Studying ways to lower costs of the transportation of grain for food;
- Promoting Maryland poultry products in overseas markets;
- Efforts to increase State purchases of Maryland poultry and agricultural products;
- Identifying ways to use existing State economic development programs to better support agriculture; and
- Analyzing the State's animal health diagnostic laboratory in Salisbury and assessing the State's ability to effectively prevent, detect, and contain serious poultry disease outbreaks.

Governor Ehrlich created the action team by Executive Order (01.01.2003.17) on June 23, 2003, to address concerns about the future of the Maryland's poultry industry after Tyson Foods announced it would close its Berlin facility, affecting 650 employees and 155 poultry growers.

Team members met weekly at Wor-Wic Community College in Salisbury to gather information, hear presentations, and formulate its report. The team addressed the following points: the history of the industry, environment, marketing, economic impact, labor, land use, and transportation. Presenters, including the CEOs of each of the four major poultry companies operating in Maryland, environmental groups, economic development officials, and economists, and land use and agriculture marketing experts among others, informed the group about their respective fields and recommended actions that might strengthen the industry.

“On behalf of the entire Poultry Issues Action Team, I thank Governor Ehrlich for the opportunity to contribute our combined knowledge and expertise to help an industry that we care deeply about and that contributes so much to the state and its citizens,” said Joe Chisholm, chairman of the Poultry Issues Action Team.

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